

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4606

August 26, 2020

The Honorable Pete Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C St. S.W.
Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor,

I write to respectfully request an urgent briefing with my office and interested local stakeholders on the eligibility of Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR) under the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance program.

As you know, a derecho hit the State of Iowa on August 10 with the intensity and windspeeds of a hurricane, causing extensive damage to thousands of trees, which caused severe damage to households and properties. A Major Disaster Declaration has been approved for 16 of the counties affected by this storm, which includes Public Assistance for debris removal. However, communities across Iowa, and in particular, the City of Cedar Rapids and the surrounding area, have made it clear that the additional support for Iowa home and property owners is needed.

Per FEMA's Public Assistance and Policy Guide (effective June 1, 2020), there are circumstances in which FEMA may determine that debris removal from private property is eligible under the Public Assistance Program. Additional guidance from FEMA on the parameters of eligibility and the approval process for private property debris removal is needed immediately to ensure that our communities are in the best possible position to secure aid to address ongoing unmet needs.

Simply put, all potential applicants for Public Assistance need to know their options when it comes to the federal assistance available for recovery in the wake of this terrible disaster, especially a program that would address a major problem for Iowans who stand to shoulder the full cost of tree removal.

Since learning of this program, we have been in touch with local officials about the potential for PPDR, but need to hear from FEMA directly about the possibility of this program working in Iowa and the next steps necessary for approval.

I know we can work together for Iowans to make sure the Federal government provides clear guidance, uses every authority, and makes every resource available to them in this recovery. Thank you for your consideration. My office will be in contact with FEMA staff to arrange for the briefing promptly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "abby finkenauer", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Abby Finkenauer
Member of Congress